

**Drying botanical specimens in sand.**—This mode of drying specimens can not be called new, but, so far as I know, it is little practiced. Sometimes a botanist needs a faithful drawing of a plant as a whole, or in part. Perhaps he is too busy to make it at once, and may not have time to do it until the season of the plant is past. An herbarium specimen is not a satisfactory object for his purpose, and yet sometimes he must make it do. In the average case of this kind, the unfortunate victim of circumstances will find a sand-dried specimen to be as good for his purpose as the living plant. Suppose one wants to make a drawing of *Enothera caespitosa* Nutt., and can not find time for the work until the plant has been out of bloom a month. By faithfully following the directions offered he will have just what he needs: Take a tin can, or other vessel large enough to hold the specimen without cramping in the least degree. Place the specimen in the vessel in a natural position. Carefully sift into the vessel very fine, clean sand, previously warmed in an oven. Gently tap the outside of the can from time to time, in order to settle the sand slowly and evenly about the specimen. Sift in the sand until the specimen is completely covered. When this is done properly, every leaf is buried in its natural shape; even the delicate stamens and the more delicate petals are packed in the exact position in which they were developed. In removing the sand, after the specimen is dry, which takes from six hours to a week, according to its nature, great care must be exercised so as not to break the more fragile parts of the plant. To do the work nicely one should have a can made for the purpose. This need causes me to suggest the following device, which answers well. The size of this vessel will depend upon the individual requirements of the owner. It consists of a can with a funnel-shaped bottom, having the aperture closed with a screw-cap. It may be conveniently supported in a wooden frame. This is a simple contrivance and not expensive. If one so desires, a rubber tube may be attached to the outlet at the bottom, through which the sand may be run into some convenient receptacle and saved for future use.

Specimens dried by this method are not nearly so brittle as pressed ones; they retain their colors perfectly, as a usual thing, but they can not be recommended for the herbarium, because they take up too much valuable space.—F. W. ANDERSON, *Great Falls, Mont.*

---

## EDITORIAL.

THE DISCUSSION concerning botanical nomenclature is now fairly on and can do no harm. Mr. Britten, in the *Journal of Botany* (Sept.), has written at some length concerning "recent tendencies in American botanical nomenclature," taking for his text the recently published catalogue of New York plants, and, in the main, protesting against the proposed changes. Mr. E. E. Sterns, in the *Bulletin of the Torrey Club* (Sept.), puts very clearly the views of those advocating reform in nomenclature,



and seeks to unmask opinion by proposing articles of agreement for signature, a sort of marshalling of the opposing forces. This might work in war, but is hardly practicable in mere questions of opinion. It smacks too much of the "stand-by-your-guns" principle, and does not leave enough of a loop-hole for some of us to crawl through and change sides when we want to be "converted and absorbed." The agreement proposed for signature practically settles the question for those who sign it, and announces that it is no longer open for discussion so far as they are concerned. The same, of course, would be true of any opposing agreement. We consider this, therefore, hardly the practicable way to begin a friendly discussion, in which one party is expected to eventually absorb the other, but simply a way to insure their never agreeing. It is suggested that the opposition to this reform may come from inertia, jealousy, or an honest difference of opinion. The first two, it is said, are so unworthy as "to be passed in silence," with which statement we heartily agree, and would even add that they are so unworthy that they should not even have been mentioned. One thing that will make the discussion confusing and lack directness of contact is the attempt to discuss more than one question at a time. It is our opinion that we could take the question as to the priority of genera as settled, as there seems to be no ground for argument in the case. It only becomes a question of certainty as to what the authors had in mind, and then as to publication. As to the rights of the specific appellation and manner of citing authorities, there may be honest differences of opinion; but the former question is so much more important than the latter that it may well be the only one considered at present. Proper citation of a name can only be considered after the name itself is settled. The absolute necessity of making a specific name permanent is not open to argument; it is only a question as to the best plan. It should also not be questioned as to our own procedure when we transfer a species to another genus; of course we should use the same specific name unless we find it preoccupied. It is a very different thing, as we look at it, to make a third combination, which can be referred to neither of the previous authors; but even in this we might be induced to vote with the majority if it did not involve the digging up of long buried and forgotten names to the utter confusion of the present fairly established names of many plants, and these forgotten names too often very uncertain of application. It has been our thought, therefore, in view of the well nigh hopeless task of discovering the meaning of even the majority of oldest specific names, that the simplest practice was to take the oldest combination of generic and specific names. To sum up, therefore, the old botanist (for we take for granted that the recent ones would not do it) who transferred a species and changed its specific name should not have done it (if he knew of the existence of the former name); but, having done it, the name stands. We do not write this to express our readiness to sign an agreement in opposition to that referred to, for we still want to remain open to conviction.